

### REVISION HISTORY:

Revision Date	Revision Summary
09-13-2011	Initial Release
09-21-2011	Clarifies Help Desk business hours Clarifies the following for the on-line assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Applicants cannot go back and change answers; applicants should not skip questions</li><li>▪ Answers are not labeled as A, B, C, D, or E</li><li>▪ Applicants must certify their responses to each part</li></ul>

### INTRODUCTION:

This Assessment Preparation Guide is intended for applicants to the PMF Program's Class of 2012 and covers the Program's assessment process. After the application process, those applicants found eligible and have submitted completed applications, will be invited to participate in the first phase of the assessment process, the un-proctored, timed on-line assessment. Between the nomination deadline and during the on-line assessment, applicants will be further reviewed for school accreditation and nomination status. Based on scores from the on-line assessment (and verifying the above), semi-finalists will be selected and invited to the second phase of the assessment process, the in-person assessment. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) administers both phases of the assessment process.

Please review the entire "Become a PMF" section on the PMF website at [www.pmf.gov](http://www.pmf.gov). This section includes information about the application process, assessment process, and frequently asked questions.

Applicants who requested reasonable accommodations for either stage of the assessment process will be contacted beforehand.

Given the variety of employment opportunities offered to graduate students, we are happy that you have placed the Federal Government among the potential employers for whom you may choose to work. As the Federal Government strives to meet the challenges of managing and administering sound public policies and programs, the opportunities available to PMFs are extraordinary. The PMF Program is a unique and rewarding beginning to a public service career.

We welcome your interest in the PMF Program and wish you well in the assessment process.

### ON-LINE ASSESSMENT PREPARATION:

The on-line assessment consists of a Situational Judgment Assessment, Life Experience Assessment, and a Writing Sample. This assessment is designed to assess competencies that are critical to success in the PMF position. This guide is designed to familiarize you with the on-line assessment process and its key features so that you:

- Know what to expect on the assessment and are prepared to do your best.
- Have a better chance of success.
- Can take the on-line assessment feeling more confident and at ease.

The on-line assessment provides a screening process on job-related criteria and allows OPM to identify semi-finalists to participate in the in-person assessment. PMFs serve in a broad range of positions that will prepare them to be leaders of tomorrow. Certain skills and abilities like problem solving, adaptability, integrity, service motivation, relating to others, and writing are needed to perform well in these positions. You should be aware that the program which you are applying is based on rigorous standards and that the selection process is highly competitive. This assessment helps identify individuals with important job-related abilities and personal characteristics.

### **General Test-Taking Tips:**

- Get a good night's sleep. It is important to get adequate sleep the night before you take the assessment.
- Eat a light, nutritious meal. Although you may be a bit nervous before taking the assessment, it is important to eat a light and nutritious meal. By doing so, you will increase your energy level.
- Pay careful attention to all directions before beginning.
- For each question, read the entire question and all response options carefully before deciding upon an answer.
- Ignore any patterns of answers. There is no pattern to the location of the best answer for each item.

### **Contents of the PMF On-Line Assessment**

There are three parts of the on-line assessment: Situational Judgment, Life Experience, and Writing. In addition, after completing each part, you will be taken to a certification screen to certify your responses prior to submission. DO NOT close your browser or exit out of the on-line assessment until you have certified your responses. Each assessment is timed. Parts A and B are multiple choice questions and Part C is the Writing Sample. Once you complete a question, you will not be able to go back and review or edit your answers. The table below provides the number of items and time allowed for each assessment part.

Assessment Part	Number of Items	Time Allowed
A. Situational Judgment	54	40 minutes
B. Life Experience	120	45 minutes
C. Writing	N/A	10 minutes

Semi-finalists will be identified based on their performance in the online test, and any adjudicated veterans' preference points.

### **Preparing for the PMF On-Line Assessment**

The following system requirements must be met for the on-line assessment to display and function properly on your computer:

- A broadband internet connection is recommended. Use of dial-up connections will affect the performance of the system and are not recommended.
- Use of either Internet Explorer 7.0 or above, or Firefox 3.0 or above is required.
- Interface browsers such as AOL or CompuServe are not compatible with the assessment site
- Make sure JavaScript and Cookies are enabled.

- Pop-up blockers must be disabled prior to accessing the assessment site.
- Some of the assessment may require speakers and a sound card to hear the audio portion of the assessment. NOTE: The audio portion, if any, is presented in closed-captioning.
- Adobe Flash Player is required. You will be provided with the opportunity to download the free Flash player, if necessary.
- If you have questions about the computer requirements or encounter technical difficulties, please contact HelpDesk@USAJOBSAssess.gov. The Help Desk is available October 1-10, 2011, 8:00am – 8:00pm (ET), Monday through Friday, and 9:00am – 6:00pm (ET), Saturday and Sunday.

Descriptions for each assessment part, including instructions and sample questions are described below.

### **Part A. Situational Judgment Assessment**

The Situational Judgment Assessment requires you to read through a series of scenarios relevant to PMF work. The questions place you in realistic situations that you are likely to encounter as a PMF. Through a series of multiple choice questions you'll be asked to select an option based on how you would most likely respond or least likely respond in each situation. This section of the guide will provide you with useful information about how to do your best on the Situational Judgment Assessment.

Questions in the Situational Judgment section draw primarily on your experiences in working with and relating to others in a work setting. In each of the questions in this section, you are asked to indicate how you would respond in a given situation. If you are not currently in a work group, you can answer the questions based on experiences you may have had in previous jobs or in school, social, athletic, or volunteer organizations.

#### **Part A. Situational Judgment Sample Questions**

Four sample questions are provided below to give you an idea of the type of questions you will encounter when completing the Situational Judgment Assessment.

**Directions:** In each of the following situations, you are asked to indicate how you would respond. No special training or experience is required to answer these questions. Identify from the response options the one that best represents how you would handle the situation. Select the response that is closest to how you would actually handle the situation, not the response that you think others might select or the response that you think is expected.

**Sample Question 1:** You are a member of a project team in your office. During a project meeting a colleague gives you a task that you do not feel qualified or trained to handle. Which of the following actions are you most likely to take?

- ☐ Complete the task as best you can.
- ☐ Complain to your supervisor.
- ☐ Ask someone in the office who knows how to do the task to help you.
- ☐ Explain to the colleague that you do not feel qualified to work on the task and you would prefer that the task be given to someone else.

**Sample Question 2:** You are a member of a project team in your office. During a project meeting a colleague gives you a task that you do not feel qualified or trained to handle. Which of the following actions are you least likely to take?

- ☐ Complete the task as best you can.
- ☐ Complain to your supervisor.
- ☐ Ask someone in the office who knows how to do the task to help you.
- ☐ Explain to the colleague that you do not feel qualified to work on the task and you would prefer that the task be given to someone else.

**Sample Question 3:** One of your customers has arrived at your office and wishes to speak with your supervisor, who is not at her desk right now. The customer is frustrated because she has left several messages on your supervisor's voice-mail in the past week and has not received a call in return. You know that your supervisor is attending a meeting that will last for at least another hour. Which of the following actions are you most likely to take?

- ☐ Find out what the customer needs and interrupt the meeting.
- ☐ Find out what the customer needs and assure the caller that your supervisor will get the message.
- ☐ Tell the customer that your supervisor is not available.
- ☐ Ask the customer if someone else in the office can help her.

**Sample Question 4:** One of your customers has arrived at your office and wishes to speak with your supervisor, who is not at her desk right now. The customer is frustrated because she has left several messages on your supervisor's voice-mail in the past week and has not received a call in return. You know that your supervisor is attending a meeting that will last for at least another hour. Which of the following actions are you least likely to take?

- ☐ Find out what the customer needs and interrupt the meeting.
- ☐ Find out what the customer needs and assure the caller that your supervisor will get the message.
- ☐ Tell the customer that the manager is not available.
- ☐ Ask the customer if someone else in the office can help her.

## **Part B. Life Experience Assessment**

The Life Experience Assessment contains questions involving work- and education-related experiences. In this assessment you will be instructed to select one answer from among the alternatives presented. Some questions will ask you to consider your experience in working with and relating to others in a work setting. If you are not currently employed then you will be instructed to answer questions based on experiences you may have had in previous jobs, or in your academic pursuits. No special training or experience is required to answer these questions.

When completing this assessment, remember:

- Do not skip questions; it is in your best interest to answer every question.
- A response of "I don't know" means that you would expect the other person not to know or to have no basis for making a judgment if asked to describe you.
- The term "peer" refers to co-workers, classmates, or other close associates.

Please note that your responses are subject to verification and deliberate attempts to falsify information may be grounds for not being selected or for being dismissed after beginning work.

## **Part B. Life Experience Sample Questions**

Two sample questions are provided below to give you an idea of the type of questions you will encounter when completing the Life Experience Assessment.

**Sample Question 1:** In the past when I have given a speech or presentation, I was likely to have prepared ahead of time:

- ☐ much less than others did
- ☐ less than others did
- ☐ about the same as others did
- ☐ more than others did
- ☐ much more than others did

**Sample Question 2:** When working as a member of a team, I prefer to:

- ☐ do less complex tasks
- ☐ keep a low profile
- ☐ always take the lead
- ☐ take on challenging tasks but not take the lead
- ☐ take the lead at times

**NOTE:** There are no correct responses listed for the *Situational Judgment and Life Experience* sample questions because answers to these questions will depend on your individual experiences, preferences, and opinions.

### **Part C. Writing Sample**

The Writing Sample requires you to provide a written response based on a question or topic provided to you in the assessment. This is a very straightforward assessment that will require you to simply type a written response to an open-ended question or prompt. Superior written communication skills are critical for being an effective leader or manager. Accordingly, the writing sample measures your ability to communicate in writing.

The writing sample will be used to measure your ability to communicate an appropriate message in writing, organization of content in a clear and appropriate manner, and proper grammar usage.

**NOTE:** As soon as you start Part C, the timer will start and you will have 10 minutes to complete the Writing Sample. You cannot use a word processor and spell check. The system will not allow cutting and pasting text into or within the essay box.

### **Part C. Example of Writing Sample**

An example of the kind of question or prompt you will encounter when completing the Writing Sample is provided below.

**Sample Question:** The PMF Program provides many potential opportunities and challenges for individuals interested in working for the Federal Government. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a career in public service.

## **IN-PERSON ASSESSMENT PREPARATION:**

The second phase of the PMF Program's assessment process is the in-person assessment, a structured interview. The structured interview consists of a set of questions related to competencies that are critical for success as a PMF. All semi-finalists will be asked the same set of questions. The interview questions ask candidates to describe their past experiences and activities. Your interview will be conducted and evaluated by a two-person panel. Finalists will be identified based on their performance in the structured interview, and any adjudicated veterans' preference points.

Based on the preference you selected during the application process, you will be invited to one of the six identified locations for the structured interview:

- Atlanta, GA
- Boston, MA
- Chicago, IL
- Denver, CO
- San Francisco, CA
- Washington, DC

The overall structured interview process will take approximately one hour. All semi-finalists should arrive 30 minutes prior to his or her scheduled interview time. Once you arrive at the in-person assessment center location you will receive information on what to expect during the structured interview. Semi-finalists should allocate 2-3 hours total. The structured interview panels will be composed of two Federal Agency representatives. These panel members are trained PMF assessors. You will be evaluated on the following competencies during the structured interview:

- Problem Solving
- Motivation to Serve
- Interpersonal Skills
- Oral Communication
- Adaptability

You will be responsible for your travel expenses to attend the in-person assessment. Semi-finalists will receive a Test Admission Notice approximately two weeks prior to their scheduled in-person assessment and will begin promptly at the time stated in notice. Late arrivals **cannot** be admitted and stand-bys are **not** allowed.

If the Federal Government location in the assessment center location closes for any reason (e.g., inclement weather, emergency) then the in-person assessments will not be held. You will receive further guidance via email (from FedTest@opm.gov) on when your in-person assessment is rescheduled. You are responsible for monitoring any email communications regarding the in-person assessment. Applicants are reminded to check the “News & Events” section on the PMF website for any notices. Semi-finalists should review the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) found under the “Become a PMF” section on the PMF website. Specifically, FAQ# 21 is in regards to lost notices and how to reschedule, and FAQ# 23 is in regards to closures.

### **Example of Structured Interview Question**

An example of the kind of question you will encounter when completing the Structured Interview is provided below.

**Sample Question:** Describe a situation in which you dealt with individuals who were difficult, hostile, or distressed. Who was involved? What specific actions did you take and what was the result?

### **DISCLAIMER**

The sample questions provided are neither practice assessments, nor simulations of actual assessment conditions for the PMF on-line assessment. However, they do resemble the actual assessments in style and format. Completing the sample questions does not ensure an increase in your assessment score or in your aptitude to perform work as a Presidential Management Fellow. Neither does attending workshops nor studying the exam techniques.